EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

As authorized under the 1998 Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21), the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) proposes to construct an Amtrak and commuter rail station in the Hillsgrove area of the City of Warwick along the Northeast Rail Corridor (NEC), and provide an automated people mover connection between the train station and T.F. Green Airport (the Airport). The project area is shown in Figure ES-1.

To adequately serve the new train station, RIDOT proposes an electrified rail shuttle to be considered in the future that would provide frequent service between the Providence metropolitan area and the Airport. Such a shuttle train would operate along the NEC. The train station and people mover project has independent utility and is not dependent on the shuttle service. The shuttle train is not evaluated in this Environmental Assessment (EA) and may be the subject of future environmental documentation.

This section summarizes the EA for the proposed Warwick Intermodal Train Station Project. These improvements are necessary to alleviate projected traffic congestion along the roadways in the Airport area that will result from substantial current and future growth in passenger use at the Airport. In addition, the improvements will support and enhance the proposed redevelopment within a 22-acre Intermodal Zone between the NEC and the Airport, as proposed and recently enacted by the City of Warwick.

The EA for the Warwick Intermodal Train Station Project has been prepared pursuant to rules and regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended) 40 CFR Parts, 1500-1508, and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR 771). In particular, the EA has been prepared in compliance with FHWA Technical Advisory 6640.8A (1987), and is submitted pursuant to 42 USC 4332 (2) (c) by the U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA and RIDOT.

The EA identifies the potential environmental impacts associated with the preferred alternative. The No Build alternative is addressed as a viable option and as a basis of comparison to the preferred alternative. The EA process has provided opportunities for public input into the assessment of environmental consequences of the project.

Purpose and Need

The NEC is located approximately 1,570 feet west of the new terminal at the Airport. It is the closest Amtrak rail line to a major airport terminal in the country. As upgrades continued to be made to the NEC by Amtrak, major investments have been taking place at the Airport, the State's principal air transport facility. The Airport is operated by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC). Since 1991, more than $210 million has been invested to construct a new two-story terminal building, access roads, parking facilities and related improvements. The new facilities at the Airport have been in operation since 1996 and have proved to be remarkably successful. With new facilities in place, the RIAC was able to attract Southwest Airlines to the Airport and passenger volumes increased sharply. In 1996, the airport served 2.5 million passengers while just a year later (1997), that number increased to 4.1 million. RIAC projects passenger numbers to continue to grow and reach 6 million passengers by the Year 2000. This projection is independent from the effects of the train station and people mover project.

With improvements on the NEC nearly complete, and the successful Airport nearby, State and local transportation officials have sought to create an intermodal gateway connecting the two transportation facilities. The 1998 TEA 21 authorized $25 million for a new Warwick Amtrak/Commuter Rail Station with an elevated people mover to connect the new station to the Airport terminal building.

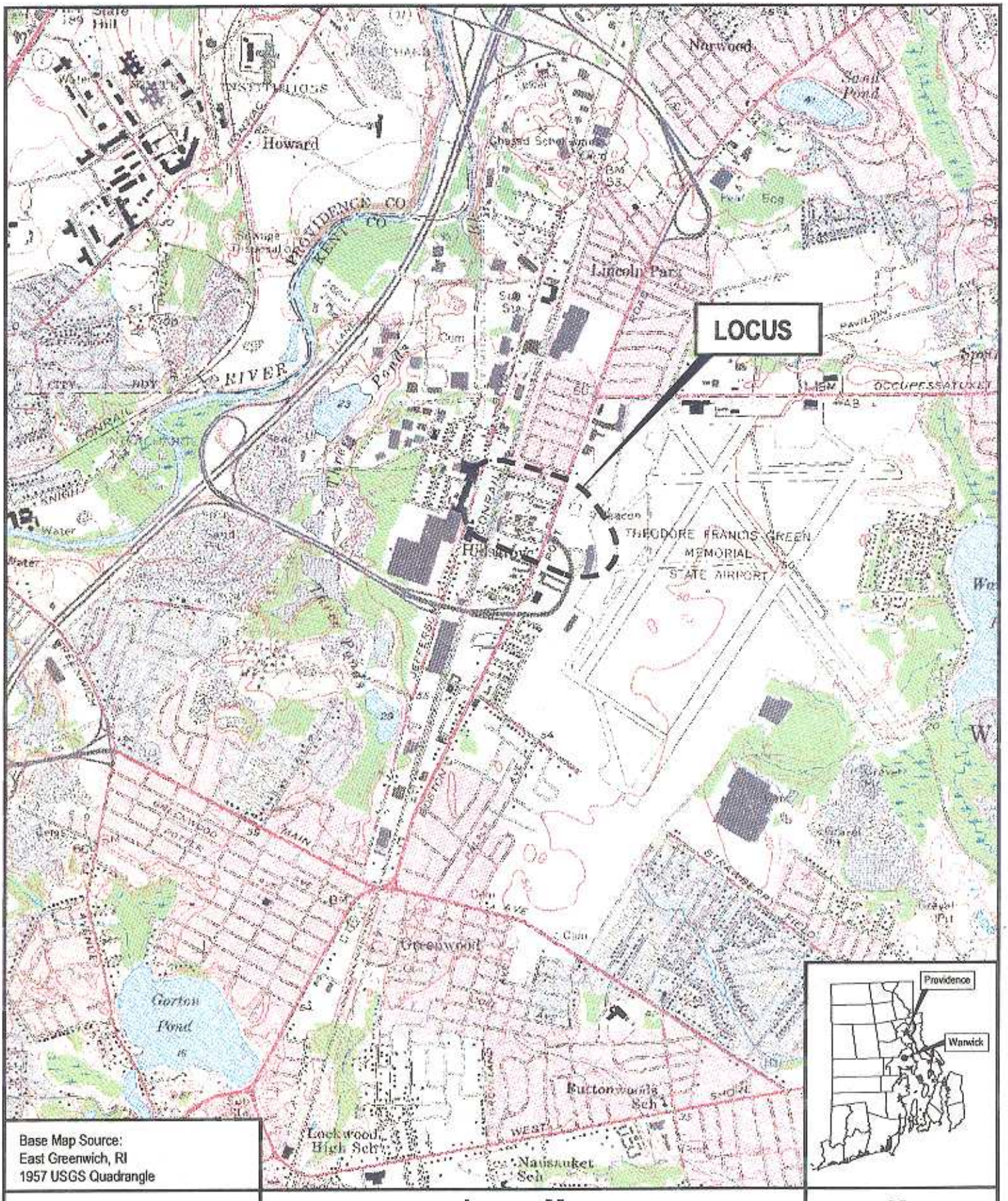
The following is a summary of the project's purpose and need:

➢ Transportation

The proposed project has two primary transportation purposes:

- To relieve peak hour traffic congestion in the I-95 corridor in the Providence metropolitan area by diverting drivers of single occupant vehicles to use the rail station and people mover to access the Airport. The proposed people mover element of the project is intended to make the new train station an intermodal facility. Any modal shift will serve to preserve available roadway capacity on Post Road (U.S. Route 1) and local roadways.

- To provide an additional mode of travel for area residents to access jobs in Providence and Boston. Projections for daily use of the commuter rail station show that some 400-500 commuters would use the proposed station.



Base Map Source:
East Greenwich, RI
1957 USGS Quadrangle

Rhode Island Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Locus Map
Warwick Intermodal Station
at T.F.Green Airport
Warwick, Rhode Island

Scale: 1"=2,000'

N

Figure ES-1

➢ Economic Development

The proposed project will support and enhance the City of Warwick's redevelopment efforts as described in the City's Warwick Station Redevelopment District Plan enacted December 14, 1998. The train station and people mover would provide intermodal access opportunities to the surrounding 22-acre Intermodal Zone. The proposed project would enhance economic development opportunities within the Intermodal Zone, in addition to the adjacent 48-acre Gateway Zone.

➢ Environmental

The proposed project will improve air quality by reducing automobile traffic volumes along I-95 and the roadways adjacent to the Airport. Any diversion of trips from automobile to rail will assist in improving existing air quality conditions, which has been classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a serious non-attainment area for ozone.

The proposed project will provide for the cleanup and removal of documented hazardous material and groundwater contamination from the land parcels proposed for the train station, thereby improving and enhancing the environmental quality in the area.

Alternatives Considered

The proposed project consists of the following two major components:

- Amtrak/commuter rail station on the NEC
- Automated people mover connection to the Airport

A future electrified rail shuttle between Providence and Warwick has been proposed by RIDOT. The proposed train station and people mover project has independent utility from the shuttle service.

The public scoping process developed by RIDOT and FHWA for this project provided input as to the selection of practicable and feasible alternatives for the two major components.

The following are the alternatives considered for this project:

No Build Alternative
The No Build Alternative assumes the following independent transportation improvements will be implemented. Note that a significant volume of train traffic will pass through the proposed Warwick station area because of these improvements, even without the train station and people mover project.

- Continuance of existing ground transportation system adjacent to the Airport, in addition to future Amtrak high-speed train service on the NEC

- Implementation of RIDOT's Freight Rail Improvement Project (FRIP) on the NEC. The FRIP would provide a third railroad track approximately 23 miles long between Quonset Davisville Port and Commerce Park in North Kingstown and Central Falls in Pawtucket. The third track would be for use by freight trains, thereby not using the same tracks as the Amtrak passenger trains.

- South County Commuter Rail Service between Providence and Westerly on the NEC

- Year 2018 proposed transportation improvements as currently planned by RIDOT

Build Alternative

The Build Alternative includes a train station and a people mover system in Warwick near the Airport. The following briefly discusses alternatives for both project components.

Train Station Sites Considered

Jefferson Boulevard North — This is the area north of the Jefferson Boulevard and Coronado Road intersection. The approximately 3-acre site includes several small businesses. This site was dropped from study due to the lack of a reasonably direct connection to the Airport terminal for a people mover, the impacts upon active businesses and its proximity to a church and school.

Leviton Parking Lot — This approximately 3.5-acre site has suitable access from Jefferson Boulevard and a parking area with approximately 300 spaces. The site is situated so that a people mover connection would be easily aligned with the Airport terminal. This privately owned lot currently provides parking for employees of Leviton, one of Warwick's major industrial employers. The parking area is not currently fully used. Relocation of some parking spaces to other areas within the Leviton property would be required.

Leviton/Baylis Chemical Site — The Baylis Chemical site is approximately 1.2 acres in size. The Baylis Chemical property was formerly used to process hazardous wastes. The site is contaminated and requires expensive clean up. Although the

Baylis site by itself is not large enough to accommodate required parking for the station, the property can be used for access to the station and the people mover. The Bayliss site is located east of and across the railroad tracks from the Leviton site. When the two sites are combined in the project plans, the Leviton site provides a large parking lot for the station. The Leviton parking lot site combined with the Baylis site ranked high as a candidate station site in the alternatives evaluation. The site meets both objectives of keeping the station and parking west of the railroad tracks to facilitate highway access and of keeping the people mover connection east of the tracks to facilitate airport access.

Leviton/Budget Rental Site

This site is occupied by Budget truck rental and maintenance facilities. This property combined with the Leviton site was considered to maximize train station parking facilities, and provide for a long-term Amtrak parking lot, distinct from the commuter rail lot.

Hillsgrove South Area

This site is located north of the Airport Connector Road and east of the railroad tracks. This site was dropped from further study because it is too far south of the Airport terminal to make a good connection for a people mover. The area consists of single family residential homes. Access to this area would be via Post Road, which is already heavily traveled, and a less desirable access point than Jefferson Boulevard, which carries a lower volume of traffic.

Connector Road Area

This area is south of the Connector Road and east of the railroad tracks. This site was dropped from further study because it is substantially south of the Airport terminal, making a people mover connection quite difficult. The site is occupied by several businesses and access to the site would be from Post Road, an already congested roadway.

Table ES-1 summarizes the basic characteristics of each of the train station sites considered.

Table ES-1 Summary of Potential Station Locations

Potential Site	Characteristics			
	Intermodal Connection	Highway Access	Community Impacts	Development Interface
Jefferson Blvd. North	Indirect	Jefferson Blvd.	Business Relocation Required	Less Feasible
Leviton Parking Lot	Direct	Jefferson Blvd.	No Building on Lot	Less Feasible
Leviton/Budget	Direct	Jefferson Blvd.	Business Relocation Required	Feasible
Leviton/Baylis	Direct	Jefferson Blvd. & Post Road	Clean-up of Baylis Required	Feasible
Hillsgrove South	Indirect	Post Road	Business and Residential Relocation Required	Less Feasible
Connector Road	Indirect	Post Road	Business Relocation Required	Less Feasible

People Mover Systems

Several types of people mover systems were studied for potential application to this project, including:

- Personal Rapid Transit (PRT)
- Monorail
- Moving Sidewalk
- Horizontal Elevator
- Airport Bus Shuttle

After analysis of each system, including costs and system characteristics, the PRT, monorail and airport bus shuttles were dropped from further consideration. These systems did not meet the multiple and seamless access needs of the project as fully developed. The moving sidewalk and horizontal elevator were selected for the preferred people mover route. These systems best met the access needs of the railroad station and the airport as well as the future proposed economic development between Post Road and the railroad tracks.

People Mover Routes

The following is a description of the proposed alternative routes of the people mover that were considered in this study:

Coronado Road — The people mover uses the Coronado Road right-of-way between the train station and Post Road, and approaches the airport terminal on the north side of the airport loop roads.

Fresno Road — The people mover uses the Fresno Road right-of-way between the train station and Post Road, and approaches the airport terminal through the short-term parking lot to either the center or south end of the terminal building.

Montebello Street — The people mover uses Glenham Avenue to the south, and Montebello Street right-of-way between the train station and Post Road, and approaches the Airport terminal along the south loop road and Airport Connector Road.

Table ES-2 Summary of Characteristics of Alternative People Mover Routes

People Mover Route	Route Length (feet)	Direct Intermodal Connection	Supports Redevelopment District	Visual Impacts	Construction Issues
Coronado Road	1,720	No	No	Yes	Major grade differentials
Fresno Road	1,570	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uses existing roadway
Montebello Street	2,200	No	No	Yes	Substantially higher structure

Preferred Alternative

The project's preferred alternative is to construct an Amtrak/commuter rail station on the west side of the NEC on the Leviton Parking Lot and Budget Rental sites, with a connection at the Baylis Chemical site to a people mover system along Fresno Road to the Airport terminal. The people mover system consists of two components:

(1) an elevated moving sidewalk above Fresno Road between the train station and Imera Street; and
(2) an elevated horizontal elevator between Imera Street, through the RIAC short-term parking lot, and the Airport terminal building or upper roadway.

The preferred alternative is shown on Figure ES-2.

The design of the people mover connection between the train station and the Airport terminal will be detailed in the next phase of the project. A final decision on the technology and equipment to be employed has not yet been made. Preliminary analysis conducted for this EA indicates that a feasible and cost-effective configuration would consist of a combination of a moving sidewalk and a horizontal elevator, connecting the intermodal station concourse at its second level and the Airport terminal. The 300-foot moving sidewalk would be inside a weatherproof structure, similar to the new elevated and enclosed moving sidewalks connecting the West Garage with two terminals at Boston's Logan International Airport (Logan).

The easterly end of the moving sidewalk would interface with the second component of the people mover, a horizontal elevator, at a lobby that would also be accessible to planned adjacent development. The horizontal elevator will travel on an elevated structure a distance of approximately 1,200 feet and connect to a glass-enclosed area adjacent to the second level roadway immediately in front of the airport terminal. The preferred alternative design needs to be flexible so the people mover will terminate either in front of the terminal or at its south end, at the upper roadway or connect to the building. This analysis does not preclude consideration of an enclosed people mover during the design phase.

The technology for this type of people mover is proprietary and the specifics of what the system will look like will be refined during the design phase of the project. Generally, however, the system may work and look like the 800-foot-long horizontal elevator known as the "Wellington Shuttle". This operating system located in Medford, Massachusetts connects a 1,500-car parking garage to the Wellington Station of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) that serves heavy rail rapid transit (Orange Line).

The proposed electrified shuttle service between Providence Station and the proposed Warwick Station would provide an alternate intermodal access in the future for the thousands of travelers arriving at the Airport with destinations in the downtown area of Providence. It is anticipated that the shuttle would operate during peak periods at approximately 30-minute intervals. The exact operating schedule has not yet been determined. The shuttle would be serviced by a platform next to a fourth railroad track east of the mainline tracks.

The preferred alternative was selected because it best meets the purposes and need for the project, as described below:

Transportation: The station location and the people mover will be substantially visible and easily accessible so as to divert modal shifts from single-person automobile to transit, thereby helping to reduce highway congestion in the immediate area. The easy connection for rail-air travelers over busy U.S. Route 1 (Post Road) should be a major incentive to drivers to switch modes. Further, the project will increase use of new rail service by commuters, especially those not necessarily destined for air travel.

Economic Development: The new railroad station and people mover will be a major catalyst to attract economic real estate development of this underdeveloped area and make full use of the excellent multi-modal transportation facilities nearby. Further, the project supports implementation of the City of Warwick recently enacted Redevelopment District Master Plan.

Environmental: The project will divert automobile drivers to transit for Airport-related and some commuter trips, thereby having a positive effect on reducing vehicle emissions in the area. In addition, the project will cause the clean up of a site containing hazardous materials and groundwater contamination.

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION	Site Plan of People Mover	RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Figure ES-2

Environmental Impacts Assessed

The EA assesses the social and environmental effects of the Preferred Alternative, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are discussed and, where necessary, mitigation measures are identified. A summary of the major findings is presented below:

TABLE ES-3 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

ENVIRONMENTAL CATEGORY	COMMENTS	IMPACT
Land Use	· Consistent with City-enacted land use plan as part of Redevelopment District · Existing uses: light industrial, misc. commercial and residential	Beneficial Impact
Park and Recreation Areas	· No public parks or recreational facilities within the project area	No Impact
Farmland	· Soils are not suited for agriculture	No Impact
Social/Environmental Justice	· Increased employment opportunities · Supports City's development plan · Consistent with Environmental Justice objectives	Beneficial Impact
Relocation	· Relocation of one business (Budget). No relocation of housing units	No Significant Impact
Economic	· Supports City's development plan · Greater employment opportunities · Increased tax revenue due to adjacent development	Beneficial Impact
Joint Development	· Supports development at new intermodal station · Allows concentrated development along people mover alignment	Beneficial Impact
Pedestrian and Bicycle Movement	· Provides for safe pedestrian access between station and airport and alongside roadways · Provides bicycle storage	Beneficial Impact
Air Quality	. Reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled . Reduction in regional emissions	Beneficial Impact

TABLE ES-3 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (Continued)		
ENVIRONMENTAL CATEGORY	**COMMENTS**	**IMPACTS**
Noise	· Build Alternative reduces noise from all train sources within project area · Overall decrease in maximum noise levels	No Significant Impact
Traffic	· Two unsignalized intersections to be signalized · Two signalized intersections to be upgraded	No Significant Impact after Mitigation
Ridership	· Project will result in reduction of vehicle miles traveled · Project will aid in modal shift from car to train	Beneficial Impact
Water Quality	· No surface water resources located within the project area · Not within designated sole source acquirer	No Significant Impact
Permits	· Requires RIPDES Permit and State Water Quality Certification	Permits Required
Wetland	· No wetlands within the project area	No Impact
Water Body Modification and Wildlife	· No wetland or water resources within project area · No wildlife corridors or significant wildlife habitat	No Impact
Floodplain	· No impact to the 100-year or 500-year flood zones	No Impact
Wild and Scenic Rivers	· No designated rivers within the project area	No Impact
Coastal Zone	· Not located within a coastal zone	No Impact
Historic and Archaeological Preservation	· Eligibility studies completed	No Adverse Effect
Hazardous Waste Sites	· Baylis site to be remediated	Beneficial Impact
Visual	· Project intended to complement the surrounding area	Beneficial Impact
Energy	· Design will use latest energy saving features	No Significant Impact

TABLE ES-3 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (Continued)		
ENVIRONMENTAL CATEGORY	**COMMENTS**	**IMPACTS**
Construction	· No residential areas affected · Traffic impacts will be coordinated with the City and RIAC	No Significant Impact
Access	· Will provide elevators and all necessary ADA components	Beneficial Impact

Public and Agency Participation

The EA was developed through a collaborative process involving the public, State and Federal agencies and the City of Warwick. During the scoping phase, two public meetings were held on August 3 and 27, 1998, both at the Radisson Hotel in Warwick.

During scoping, the public and agencies provided comments on the alternatives being developed. All comments were responded to in writing by RIDOT. Public meetings were supplemented by telephone contact, correspondence and on-site meetings with agencies, area business owners and residents.

In addition, an agency scoping meeting was held on August 27, 1998 at the RIDOT Traffic Operations Center Conference Room. Each State and Federal agency represented was asked to provide comments and input at the meeting.

The following agencies are Cooperating Agencies for the EA:

Federal
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

State
Department of Environmental Management (DEM)
Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC)
Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)
Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (HPHC)

The following agencies, designated as Coordinating Agencies for this project, have been provided with all project information and updates as necessary:

· Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC)
· Amtrak
· Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
· City of Warwick
· Narragansett Indian Tribe

A third public informational meeting was held on October 20, 1998 at the Radisson Hotel, Warwick. The purpose of the meeting was to present the selected alternatives for analysis in the EA, the EA scope of work, and basic conceptual design components.

A fourth public meeting was held January 7, 1999 at the Radisson Hotel, Warwick, to present the Preliminary EA and its findings.